

Thomatis, Aluka Lead Lady Raiders to 74-64 Win

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Seniors Jamie Thomatis and Joanne Aluka combined for 47 points and 15 rebounds, and Aluka scored the 1,000th point of her career, to lead the Middle Tennessee Lady Raiders to a 74-64 victory over Ole Miss Saturday afternoon at the Murphy Center. Thomatis had season-highs with 31 points and 10 rebounds, her first double-double since February 15 of last season and the 10th of her career. The Destrehan, La., native went 9-of-18 from the field and a perfect 10-for-10 from the foul line, and also made three of Middle



Tennessee's five three-pointers in the contest. The visiting Lady Rebels held a 37-34 lead at halftime, but Middle Tennessee (3-2) quickly erased the deficit, going on a 14-3 run to go ahead 48-40 five minutes into the second half. But the Lady Rebels answered with a 9-0 run of their own before Paula Penttila ended the drought for MT with a three-pointer at the 12:12 mark. Nine lead chances happened over the next 5:39 of the contest, with no team holding more than a two-point advantage. Freshman Jessica Schlueter gave the Lady Raiders the lead for good at 61-60 with her only points of the game, a putback with 6:51 remaining in the game. The Lady Rebels went just 2-of-13 from the field the rest of the way, while Middle Tennessee made 11-of-12 free throw attempts down the stretch, including 8-for-8 by Thomatis. Aluka had 16 points in the contest and five rebounds, and passed the 1,000-point barrier at 5:43 of the first half, making a short jumper to become the 15th member of the Millennium Club in Middle Tennessee history. Jessica McClure added seven points and three assists off the bench for the Lady Raiders. "Our senior class has accomplished a lot but they have never beaten an SEC opponent. So this win was really special for them," Middle Tennessee head coach Stephany Smith said. "I thought we started out pretty well, and then Ole Miss opened things up. At halftime, I told our team we were in a good position and to just come out and play our game in the second half. We started playing scared about the middle of the second half, but I am proud of how our team responded." The Lady Rebels (4-2) were led by Sherika Wright and Ally Kelly, who each had 13 points. Wright added a game-high eight assists, while Tywana Inmon had nine points and six rebounds for Ole Miss. The win was the first for the Lady

Raiders over an SEC opponent since defeating Ole Miss, 88-86, in Murfreesboro on November 24, 1995. Ole Miss held a three-point lead at halftime despite committing 13 turnovers. Wright had 10 of her 13 points and four assists in the opening 20 minutes, with Kelly and Inmon each adding seven points. The Lady Rebels shot 50 percent from the field and held a 13-point lead eight minutes into the opening half. But the Lady Raiders responded with a 17-2 run over the next seven minutes to take a two-point lead with just under five minutes left in the half. Aluka had seven points during the run and Thomatis added five, including a three-pointer that gave MT the lead. The Lady Raiders return to action Wednesday with a 7 p.m. contest against UT Martin at the Murphy Center. MT also hosts Tennessee Tech at 2 p.m. on Sunday, December 9. **GAME QUOTES**

MT Head Coach Stephany Smith

"I thought we started out pretty well, and then Ole Miss opened things up. We started playing scared about the middle of the second half, but I am proud of how our team responded and came back to only be down by three to end the first half. At half time, I told our team we were in a good position and to just come out and play our game in the second half." "We were playing sagging man to protect the penetration because I felt our chance to win was to give up the penetration shots. Unfortunately, in the first half they were knocking those shots down." "Our senior class has accomplished a lot but they have never beaten an SEC opponent. So this win was really special for them." **MT Forward Joanne Aluka**

"I feels really good to join Jamie (Thomatis) in the 1,000-point club. Ole Miss had some big strong girls and it was a rough game in the paint, but I think we came out and gave good effort today. It was a wonderful feeling to win this game. To come out in my senior year and get a win over Ole Miss and an SEC team for the first time is great." **MT Forward Jamie Thomatis**

"This was a great win today. We were 0-2 against Ole Miss since I have been here and they were ugly double-digit losses. I think we had a pinch of intimidation to start the game. We came out in the second half gung-ho. We knew we were going to have to attack the middle and box out to win this game." **Ole Miss Head Coach Rod Aldy**

"We created offense with our defense in the first half. Middle Tennessee adjusted well to our press and down the stretch we shot the ball poorly and didn't execute. I think Middle Tennessee's post players were the difference in the game. Our post play was practically nil and didn't have the answer." "Middle Tennessee's record doesn't reflect it, but this is a great team. This is a team that took Georgia to the wall in overtime." **GAME NOTES**

Jamie Thomatis scored 31 points and grabbed 10 rebounds, her first double-double of the season and the 10th of her career. It also marked the 18th straight double-figure game for the senior, and the 12th 20-plus point game in her last 16 contests dating to last season. It was the seventh 30-plus point game of her career and the first since scoring 30 against Indiana on March 14, 2001, in the first round of the Women's NIT.

Joanne Aluka netted 16 points, surpassing Kelly Chastain (1997-00) for 15th place on the all-time scoring list at Middle Tennessee. Aluka also became the 15th member of the Millennium Club at MT, now standing at 1,006 points in her career.

Jessica McClure had three assists in today's contests, passing Janet Ross (1984-87) for sixth place on the all-time assist list at Middle Tennessee. McClure now has 358 career assists.

Paula Penttila went 1-of-4 from three-point range in the contest versus Ole Miss, moving into 10th place by herself on the career three-point field goals made list at Middle Tennessee.

The win over Ole Miss was the 20th all-time for the Lady Raiders over an SEC opponent. Middle Tennessee is now 20-57 all-time against the SEC. It was also the first win over an SEC opponent since defeating Ole Miss, 88-86, on November 26, 1995, in Murfreesboro.

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